

FAS Fall 2020 Plans

July 6, 2020

Dear members of the FAS community,

On June 15, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences provided an **interim report** on fall planning efforts that outlined three possible pathways for how we might return students to campus. After careful deliberation, and informed by extensive input from our community, we write today to **announce** our plans to bring up to 40% of our undergraduates to campus, including all first-year students, for the fall semester. Assuming that we maintain 40% density in the spring semester, we would again bring back one class, and our priority at this time is to bring seniors to campus. Under this plan, first years would return home and learn remotely in the spring. We also will invite back to campus those students who may not be able to learn successfully in their current home learning environment.

In making this consequential decision, we have been guided by the same core principles we established at the outset of this crisis: to put health and safety first, protect the academic enterprise, leverage our breadth and diversity, and preserve access and affordability. Some of the attributes that we most value about our campus are exactly the things that make adaptation to pandemic conditions particularly challenging. Our bustling urban environment, the ease of grabbing the T into Boston, our intergenerational residential communities that house 98% of our undergraduates, our global research community of students, faculty, staff, postdocs, and visitors from around the world—Harvard was built for connection, not isolation. Without a vaccine or effective clinical treatments for the virus, we know that no choice that reopens the campus is without risk. That said, we have worked closely with leading epidemiologists and medical experts to define an approach that we believe will protect the health and safety of our community, while also protecting our academic enterprise and providing students with the conditions they need to be successful academically.

Harvard is eager to welcome students and scholars back to campus and recapture the residential liberal arts and sciences experience that is core to our identity. In our planning efforts, we have sought a path to bringing all students back as soon as conditions allow, while continuing their academic progress in the meantime and remaining a vibrant research community across our broad range of disciplines. But we also recognize that, fundamentally, there is an intrinsic incompatibility between our highly interactive, residential Harvard College experience and the social distancing needed to mitigate COVID-19 transmission. The recent upturn in COVID-19 cases in certain states illustrates the difficulty of making predictions, even well-informed ones, about the evolution of this virus. Given this uncertainty, we determined that our fall plan must enable us to bring back as many students as possible while providing sufficient margin to accommodate an escalation in the prevalence of COVID-19 in our area. Anything less and we could find ourselves again facing the prospect of asking our students to leave, on short notice, prior to the end of the semester. Given the constraints imposed by our existing housing inventory, we have made a decision that enables up to 40% of undergraduate students to learn from campus in appropriate accommodations, while retaining the ability to isolate and quarantine up to 250 individuals at a time. Absent an effective

vaccine or clinical therapy, this reduced density, together with a high-cadence viral testing program and universal adoption of public health practices such as face masks and frequent handwashing, is needed to safely host a significant number of undergraduates on campus. This finding is supported by extensive modeling by our public health experts.

Choosing which students would be invited to campus was not easy, and we have enormous sympathy for sophomores and juniors as they consider the prospect of not starting their fall term in Cambridge. We could not help but recognize the unique position that first-year students find themselves in, making the transition to college in these strange times. They have not yet begun to build their Harvard network of faculty, advisors, and friends or learn about life in the Yard. Even with the many adaptations that will be in place this fall, we see enormous value in having them on campus in our residential system. Though we are far from a decision about spring, as we describe below, making sure that seniors have their final semester on campus, to finish their thesis work and complete their four-year journey, is a priority we hold dear. With the experience of sophomores and juniors in mind, we have decided to extend to all students who spend the year studying away from campus the opportunity to attend Summer School in Cambridge without tuition charge in 2021. This program, described in more detail below, was designed also in recognition of the many international students and those with pre-existing medical conditions who may not be able to join us on campus during the academic year.

REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The interim planning report established that all course instruction (undergraduate and graduate) for the 2020-21 academic year will be delivered online. Students will learn remotely, whether or not they live on campus. With that in mind, we have taken the following steps:

- **Academic calendar and course scheduling:** The fall term will begin as planned on September 2, 2020. The instructional day will be expanded to accommodate synchronous instruction across a range of time zones. The Registrar will soon issue guidance about fall semester course scheduling to the academic departments.
- **Excellence in remote teaching:** As we work to prepare for the fall, we are guided by the recognition that the success of remote teaching depends on our ability to create and sustain strong connections among students and between students and faculty. Harvard's learning technologists and specialists in innovative pedagogy are supporting faculty and teaching fellows in the development of fall courses and the design of activities and assignments that take advantage of the remote format and enable students to achieve key goals, including for hands-on learning in lab and art-making courses. We are increasing instructional support by recruiting graduate students as Bok Media and Design Fellows and Remote Support Teaching Fellows. The Bok Center has also designed its **fall teaching conference** to help teaching fellows prepare for their remote teaching responsibilities. More information about required **instructor trainings** and other **remote ready resources** is available online.
- **Excellence in remote learning:** We are working to ensure that all students are prepared for remote learning. The Academic Resource Center has assembled **dedicated remote learning resources** and will be offering orientations to all incoming first-year undergraduate students.
- **Grading:** The emergency grading systems that were put in place in the spring semester will not continue into the fall semester. Fall courses for all students will return to regular grading.

- **International students:** Guidance for international students continues to evolve at a rapid pace. A town hall for international undergraduate students will be held on July 8 and the graduate student town hall meetings on July 7 and 8 will also include detailed information for international students. The latest guidance and resources are available from the **Harvard International Office**. One of the reasons that we determined early in our process that we would rely upon remote instruction was that we expect many international students will encounter challenges entering the country given that consular offices are not processing F1 visas.

LEARNING REMOTELY FROM CAMPUS

We know that students are eager to be on campus and we too are eager to return to full residential operations. Informed by a careful review of our residential capacity, the academic needs of our students, and guidance from public health experts, we have defined the group of undergraduate students who will be invited to learn from campus this fall—first-year students and those who must be on campus to progress academically.

All first-year undergraduate students will be invited to campus for the fall semester.

This will enable first-year students to benefit from a supported transition to college-level academic work and to begin to build their Harvard relationships with faculty and peers. Both online and dorm-based programs will be in place to meet these needs. Over the last few weeks, there has been frequent communication with our first-year students about their transition to Harvard and this will continue as we approach the start of the academic year.

We are committed to ensuring a secure and supportive learning environment for all students. While all courses will be taught remotely, we understand that some students may not be able to learn successfully in their current home learning environment. If a student believes they will have remote learning challenges this fall, we ask that they please complete this **form** by Monday, July 13. Student submissions will be reviewed by a committee of faculty and staff in order to identify what specific supports may be needed, including whether it may be necessary for a student to reside on campus.

Accommodations in the Yard Dorms and the Houses will be adapted to meet new public health standards. Enrolled undergraduate students who will be learning remotely from campus will live in single bedrooms with a shared bathroom. Students will be distributed across the first-year dorms and a number of upper-class Houses in order to achieve a maximum residential density of 40%. The dorms and Houses are undergoing physical modifications to support our public health goals. These include enhanced cleaning schedules, personal safety training and protective equipment for custodians, security guards, and House staff, improved air handling and filtration in shared spaces, hand sanitizer and wipe stations, and signage outlining our public health community guidelines.

Campus access will be restricted to safeguard our community's health. There will be restrictions on inter-house access to dining areas and to non-residential Harvard buildings, with the exception of Harvard University Health Services. We hope to provide some access to athletic and recreational facilities, as part of our commitment to overall wellness, though guidance for that is not yet final. No off-campus visitors will be allowed into Harvard buildings, and this will include enrolled Harvard students who are not in residence on campus. With these measures in place, we are confident that we can support campus-based remote learning while also safeguarding our residential community's health and safety.

Move-in and move-out procedures and timelines will be different. While the academic calendar for the fall semester will not change, there will be additional considerations for students who will be learning remotely from campus. Students will receive instructions regarding the protocol for a phased arrival to campus prior to the start of the semester. All students will move out for the semester by November 22 and will complete reading period and exam period from home. The standard process for granting exceptions will be followed.

This decision has implications for our Athletics program. We anticipate that the Ivy League will issue a decision on July 8 about fall sports competitions and training. Even in the absence of this guidance, we acknowledge that our medium density plan will necessarily place limits on what athletic activities are possible at Harvard this fall. An enhanced focus on wellness will be important for all members of our community. Wellness programming and resources will be developed by the Department of Athletics, Harvard University Health Services' Center for Health and Wellness, the Dean of Students Office and other partnering organizations.

UNDERGRADUATE COST OF ATTENDANCE

Tuition and fees: Tuition and fees will remain **as announced** for the 2020-21 academic year.

Room and board for students learning from home: For enrolled students who are living away from campus and attending classes remotely, obviously there will be no room and board costs included on their term bill.

Remote room and board allowance for students receiving financial aid: For enrolled students receiving financial aid who are not living on campus, the Griffin Financial Aid Office will use a "COVID-19 Remote Room and Board" allowance of \$5,000 per semester in calculating their aid award. In general, this will allow students to be supported by financial aid while studying at home. Standard room and board charges will be applied for students who are invited to live on campus, and Financial Aid budgets and awards will be adjusted to reflect that as approved.

Term-time work: Students receiving financial aid have been relieved of the term-time work expectation in the fall, replacing it with scholarship in the calculation of their financial aid award. This recognizes the current challenges of finding work and the public health considerations of work that is not remote. This does not mean that students can't or won't choose to work, but rather that there is no expectation of a work contribution to meet their cost of attendance. While aid awards will reflect this change for the year, we will review the policy for the spring term in the context of the latest public health guidelines.

Summer School credit: In recognition of the fact that many of our students will not have a residential campus experience this year, all enrolled undergraduate students who will be learning remotely from home for the full academic year 2020-21 will be eligible to come to campus to take two courses at the Harvard Summer School in the summer of 2021 under a special arrangement that waives tuition; room and board will be subsidized for students receiving financial aid.

DEFERRALS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The deadline for first-year students to **defer enrollment** has been extended to July 24, 2020. For upperclassmen deciding whether to take a **Leave of Absence**, the College has trained a

special team of advisors to help students and families. They can offer support in terms of thinking through the decision, explaining the logistics of the process, and directing students to resources before, during, and after the leave. Advisors can be reached at fall2020advising@fas.harvard.edu.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Harvard University aims to provide a campus environment that enables the pursuit of our teaching and research mission while protecting the health and safety of our community. With the restart of campus-based research over the summer, Harvard University Health Services led the implementation of required training, daily symptom attestation using the Crimson Clear web portal, viral testing, and standard public health practices such as physical distancing requirements, limits on gathering sizes, use of face coverings in public spaces, and careful hygiene. Our return to campus-based academic operations is predicated on our community's adoption of these public health practices designed to limit the spread of the virus and to keep each other and our families safe. These measures meet or exceed those in place across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Health and Safety in the Houses and Dorms

Because COVID-19 is highly contagious, an individual's actions can have serious implications for the health of the broader community. Though an undergraduate student may be at relatively low risk of complications associated with COVID-19, for example, their actions can impact the families of dining workers, security guards, House staff, and others who make residential life possible. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences promotes shared responsibility for the health and well-being of our campus community. We are truly in this together. **It is important that all students who will reside on campus in Fall 2020 read, understand, and be prepared to abide by the rules and guidelines that will be in place in the fall in order to make an informed decision about residency.** Those guidelines, as developed by Harvard University Health Services, will include, among other features, the requirement that students and residential staff participate in a viral testing program that will begin with an initial screening upon arrival, followed by testing for the virus every three days while in residence. The frequency of testing may increase or decrease depending on the prevalence of infection within the Harvard community and the region, along with other factors influencing the likelihood of exposure to the virus. Additional testing may be warranted if a student or residential staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19. The campus public health protocols will also include daily attestations of symptoms, as well as requirements to self-isolate in the event of a positive test, to talk to a healthcare professional if experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or to quarantine for known exposure to a positive case. We have established dedicated housing for quarantine and isolation, with sufficient space to appropriately house 250 individuals.

Expectations of students in residence are outlined in the undergraduate Social Compact available [here](#).

Monitoring

We have established an index of key public health factors, both on campus and in the surrounding Boston community, that we will monitor continuously. Among these are:

- The number of individuals in our community that has tested positive for the virus.
- The number of symptomatic individuals in our community.
- The Harvard community's compliance with testing and other required public health practices.
- Boston-area healthcare readiness indicators.

As we have seen over the last several weeks, with spikes to record levels of infection emerging in other parts of the country, the course of the virus can change quickly. We must be ready to respond to changing conditions and have built flexibility into every level of our operations. For example, we are prepared to seamlessly transition between touchless food pick-up and more traditional dining operations as conditions dictate. As a community we must assume that change and adjustment are part of daily life and a key attribute of informed and responsible management in a pandemic.

RESUMING RESEARCH AND OTHER CAMPUS OPERATIONS

The decision regarding undergraduate residential operations does not change the guidance to faculty, postdocs, staff, and graduate students that has already been issued regarding campus-based research or other operations. Current information on restarting research in Science and SEAS can be found [here](#). Current information on library operations can be found [here](#). The University's latest travel guidance can be found [here](#). This decision also maintains existing University guidance that most faculty, postdocs, and staff will continue to work remotely, through at least the end of the summer, unless otherwise directed by the academic division or their manager. Answers to many questions about administrative operations across the FAS can be found [here](#).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SPRING

As the description of our monitoring program makes clear, attempting definitive decisions now about things that will happen in six months would provide only a false sense of certainty. Instead, we want our community to know that we are anticipating three scenarios for undergraduate residential life in spring 2021:

- Lower residential density than fall, retaining only those students who must learn remotely from campus. We would pursue this option only if conditions worsened so that we could not manage the campus safely with 40% of students in residence as provided for in this plan.
- Continuing medium residential density, returning those students who must learn remotely from campus and one class cohort. As mentioned at the outset, the current priority cohort is the senior class.
- Higher residential density, returning those who must learn remotely from campus and more than one class cohort.

As we have noted earlier, we would like to bring back students as quickly and safely as we can. Clearly, the third option above would be our preferred path. However, much will depend on the status of the virus, our success in containing any campus-based infections, and the willingness of the entire community—our students, faculty, and staff—to abide by our protocols for testing, social distancing, facial covering, and other public health measures. We anticipate

making a decision about the spring semester in early December, including setting a date for a delayed start of the semester. We will update the community regularly throughout the fall. We are sure you have many questions that we have not answered here. Invitations have already gone out for a number of virtual town hall meetings where more information will be provided and questions can be addressed.

- FAS Faculty Town Hall: July 6 at 1 p.m. EDT
- FAS Administrators Town Hall: July 6 at 2 p.m. EDT
- College Students and Parents Town Hall: July 6 at 3 p.m. EDT
- GSAS Town Halls: July 7 at 9 a.m. EDT (returning students), July 8 at 9 a.m. EDT (incoming students)

Harvard College will hold a series of **webinars** throughout the summer to address particular student concerns.

The process of planning for the fall semester has only strengthened our commitment to the residential liberal arts and sciences experience as the means to pursuing our mission of educating leaders for our society and our diverse community of scholars; in fact, the planning process itself demonstrated the power that comes from bringing a breadth of disciplines to bear on a hard problem. This decision was informed by the models of data scientists, analyses of economists, the perspective of historians, the protocols of privacy experts, insights of life scientists, principles of philosophers, and the expertise of so many more members of our community. We are enormously grateful to the more than 100 members of our faculty and administration who have worked tirelessly to adapt Harvard to the demands the pandemic has placed on us while maintaining our commitment to academic excellence and inclusion.

As one member of our planning group reminded us last week, we navigate this history-making moment without a roadmap. Harvard will be changed by the choices we make now, and this crisis gives us an incredible opportunity to change it for the better. As we shift from planning to implementation and management, we will define mechanisms for engagement, conversations, and feedback. As we have already seen, this community has unlimited wisdom to contribute and it is our most cherished resource.

Stay safe and healthy,

Larry Bacow

Claudine Gay

Rakesh Khurana